

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strike through~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 17, 19, 21 and 22 and ADD claim 23 in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:
previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;
upon receiving an article search by a user, generating article picture arrangement data in which, among a plurality of article pictures of search results, the more similar article pictures ~~similar to each other are~~ in the features, ~~are disposed at close positions,~~ the more closely the article pictures are disposed, as search results of the article data;
sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is successively sent in accordance with the data sending rank; and
at the user terminal, displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position.
2. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.
3. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.
4. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items.

5. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items.

6. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.

7. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.

8. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items.

9. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and

the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items.

10. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.

11-16. (CANCELLED)

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping system for a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles, a service providing system comprising:

- an article data generating part for previously generating/preparing article data in which features of the article and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;
- an article database for storing the article data;
- a search processing part for searching the article database upon receiving an article search by a user;
- an article picture arrangement data generating part for receiving search results of the search processing part and generating article picture arrangement data in which, among a plurality of article pictures of search results, the more similar article pictures similar to each other are in the features, are disposed at close positions the more closely the article pictures are disposed; and
- a data sending control part for sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is arranged and sent in accordance with the data sending rank information,
- a user terminal comprising a display control part for displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order,
- wherein an article picture with a higher data sending rank is displayed earlier at an arrangement position at the user terminal.

18. (ORIGINAL) An online shopping method according to claim 17, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A program stored in a recording medium for use by a computer based online shopping system to enable a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles, the program executing operations comprising:

- previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article and a data

sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;

upon receiving an article search by a user, generating article picture arrangement data in which, among a plurality of article pictures of search results, the more similar article pictures similar to each other are in the features, are disposed at close positions the more closely the article pictures are disposed, as search results of the article data;

sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is successively sent in accordance with the data sending rank; and

at the user terminal, displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The program according to claim 19, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:
assigning a data sending rank relating at least one feature of an article to at least one feature of other articles and generating article picture arrangement data having article pictures of articles with features similar to each other disposed at close positions; and
successively displaying the article picture arrangement data responsive to an article search request from a user in accordance with the data sending rank, wherein an article picture with a higher data sending rank is displayed earlier than an article picture with a lower data sending rank and the article pictures of the articles with features similar to each other are disposed in closest proximity to each other compared to other article pictures.

22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An online shopping method, comprising:
receiving an article search request from a user and ranking article search results responsive to the article search request based on similarity; and
displaying article images of the article search results in accordance with the ranking so that article images corresponding to articles with similar features are positioned to be in adjacent positions among the displayed article images.

23. (NEW) An online shopping method, comprising:
- sorting images of articles retrieved in response to an article search request from a user
 - and positioning images corresponding to articles having similar features in close proximity; and
 - providing the sorted images of the articles to the user as a search result, where the articles having similar features are displayed as a unified group based on said sorting.